

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2004

Dr. Nguyen Van Hanh
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement
Department of Health and Human Services
370 L'Enfant Promenade S.W.
ORR/6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20447

Dear Dr. Hanh:

We are writing in regards to the impending resettlement of the Wat Tham Krabok Hmong refugees into our communities. It is our understanding that the first wave of refugees are due to arrive in the United States on June 30, 2004. In light of this timeline we request that you accelerate your notification and disbursement of grants to these communities.

For months now, in anticipation of their arrival, our communities have been preparing as best they can to ensure that they have the adequate resources to facilitate this resettlement. In this spirit our communities have developed collaborations of government, nonprofit and private sector interests to assist refugees with their immigration to the United States. Throughout this process we have reassured our communities of the commitment of the federal government to provide appropriate resources in a timely manner.


The disbursement of these grants will be an investment in the Hmong community, helping them to carry out existing programs that foster education and development for Hmong refugees. Our communities have begun to implement programs that would assist this new wave of refugees in learning English, retaining jobs that will eventually lead to independence and self-sufficiency.

We understand that your agency has until September 30, 2004 to make a determination regarding the level of funding available to certain groups. This current timeline will result in your agency making its allocations a full two months after our communities receive the first refugees. Without the certainty of federal support counties and states will be required to receive and accommodate refugees, which will cause a serious problem. Such a task will be especially difficult for most of our communities, which are experiencing their own budgetary constraints.

In a meeting with you and your staff earlier this year we discussed some of these same concerns. At that time, you assured us that your office would do what was necessary to supply the state and local communities with the necessary financial resources. With that understanding we again respectfully urge you to take the appropriate steps in ensuring that these communities receive the federal funds in a timely manner.


In closing we are confident that your office and the federal government will continue to be supportive to our local communities in the resettlement of refugees. Thank for your consideration, if we can be of any assistance to you or your staff please let us know.


Sincerely,


CALVIN DOOLEY
Member of Congress


BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress



DENNIS CARDOZA
Member of Congress


JAMES OBERSTAR
Member of Congress



RON KIND
Member of Congress

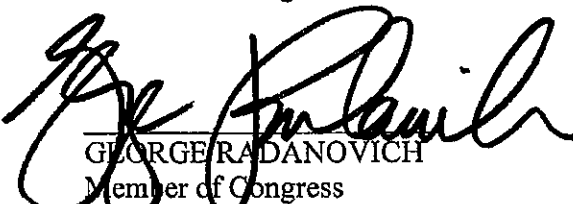

MARTIN OLAV SABO
Member of Congress


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